Building employability into the Curriculum
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Students applying for jobs must relate their specific experience to the particular needs of the potential employer. This requires (1) careful identification of what the employer wants, including translation of seemingly-familiar terms (e.g. what ‘research’ means to that employer); (2) reflection on the student’s own specific experiences to extract generic skills that can be matched to the specific needs of the job (with supporting evidence). The Careers Centre provides an interface where students negotiate between their overall experience and the requirements of the particular job. Students already exploit their extra-curricular activities for this, but are weaker at mining their academic lives for generic/transferrable skills.

Key problems:
1. How to build ‘employability’ into the curriculum without diluting academic content.
2. How to help students to analyse their academic experience in terms of generic skills.
3. How to gather information and contacts to support 1 and 2 and monitor outcomes.

1) Building ‘employability’ into the curriculum
- Curriculum and module design can emphasise key academic skills which are also highly transferrable (e.g. planning projects, collating, analysing and judging data, as in the recent research-orientated revision of Geography curriculum).
- Variety in assessment can promote the development of a wide range of skills, some of which relate to the workplace (e.g. presentations; writing for a particular audience; producing a programme for a film festival; planning a practical project; mock grant applications; assessments relating to digital humanities, e.g. publishing).

2) Helping students to analyse their academic experience in terms of generic skills.
- ‘Badging’ exercises/discussion sessions can help students identify the skills they have developed through normal module activities (including the very generic, such as time-keeping, working with others, problem-solving, etc.).
- Production of a ‘skills grid’: ask staff to characterise modules in terms of skills. This can prime students’ analysis of their own skills profile, help connect themes across modules, and also assist staff reflection on the curriculum (e.g. identifying gaps; identifying unconscious repetition so it can be eliminated or consciously exploited; informing the range and distribution of assessment-types used, etc.).
- The University’s ‘programme specifications’ include graduate attributes – potentially useful in drawing up a skills grid or informing ‘badging’ exercises, though they can be unhelpfully generic. Subject benchmark-statements may be more useful.
- Selection centres often use ‘typical scenarios’ to evaluate candidates: the Careers Centre could supply sample scenarios for use in School-level sessions.
- The above may help with NSS ‘confidence’ questions: students may not realise what skills and capabilities they actually have.

3) Gathering information and contacts
- Careers Centre surveys graduates 6 months after graduation: results reflect short-term destinations. HESA DLHE Longitudinal Survey reflects destinations after 3 years.¹

¹ A searchable database of the six-month data is available at http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/careers/destinations/.
• The 6-month survey receives more public attention but does not necessarily give the best picture of the prospects of graduates in particular subjects.

• Alumni contact details degrade over time: encourage students to join Saint Connect and/or LinkedIn St Andrews group (both run by Careers). Saint Connect has subgroups for Schools and different industries, and has alumni and students on it.

• When writing references, encourage students to join LinkedIn, Saint Connect, etc., and possibly contribute to School’s Careers Wiki as quid pro quo.

• Alumni may agree to give careers talks to current students, mentor students, etc., and can also give feedback on the skills they have needed or which made them hireable.

• School Presidents, SSCC reps, etc. can be very good at finding recent alumni.

• Industry links: some companies will cover the cost of sending a speaker if they can include a recruitment pitch. Seminar speakers with industry posts may add a short recruitment talk to a research seminar.

• Consider video-conferencing if travel costs/time are prohibitive: Adobe Connect is available (contact the Careers Centre for details).

Ralph Anderson, 13/11/2014